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## BLANK'S BIRTHPLACE.

WHEN all that is mortal of me has departed, and only my name and fame are left here below, I do trust that I shall never become the property of a Committee. I hope that no Company will set themselves to 'work' my memory as they have worked Blank's; I do indeed. It makes me sad—to think what his noble Spirit must suffer, if it be cognizant of the tribute it receives. A modest shade, like his, must blush to see his native village advertised, throughout the summer months, as the Birthplace of the Immortal Blank. None who can read a hand-bill, and who travel by railway, can possibly be left in doubt that Asterisk was his birthplace, 'the home of his boyhood, the occasional residence of his maturer years, and the spot where at last, full of years and honours, he came to pass the evening of life, and eventually to lay his venerable bones.' I quote from the circular issued by the Committee, and adopted by the railway Company in their advertisements. Every year, excursion-trains are run to his last resting-place 'on and after May 1;' positively the last trip to Asterisk ('dear to every English heart, as being the dwelling-place of Blank') occurs at the end of each October. A reduction of fares (very extensively advertised in the locality) takes place upon every return of his natal-day.

Sooner or later, an advertisement, provided only it be inserted often enough, is sure to catch you. It is no more to be evaded than death or taxes. One comes to drink Epps's Cocoa before one dies. And thus it was that Brown, Jones, and Robinson came to go to Asterisk last summer in spite of themselves. The two former resent exceedingly publicity, popularity, and everything else which is applauded by the penny papers, but they succumbed to the Inevitable. I, who am Robinson, merely went because Brown and Jones went.

Upon the railway ticket was printed in small type after the word Asterisk, Blank's Birthplace; and, indeed, had it not been his birthplace, Asterisk would not have been a railway station at all. A small branch leaves the main line for the sole and

express purpose of doing honour to Blank's memory. The other places at which it stops are savage and remote localities. One of them, I remember, was actually called Wooten-wawen, a name suggestive of the Cannibal Islands. The engine was named 'Blank;' the Tender was appropriately christened after one of the love-poems of that world-renowned author. When we arrived at our journey's end, the railway policeman, as he took our tickets at the gate, politely jerked his head in the direction of Blank's supposed residence: 'Fust turnin' on the left, and second to the right, gents; and there's the 'ouse.' I say 'supposed' residence, because it is by no means positively certain that he was ever inside it. Nothing is certain about Blank. That truly great and divinely gifted man seems to have been dowered with prescience; to have had a suspicion of what would be done with him after death, and to have purposely destroyed all evidences of his personal identity. There are numberless established theories about Blank, and new ones cropping up every day; and I should not be surprised if somebody should presently set himself to prove that Blank had never been within fifty miles of Asterisk in his life. Then the Committee would of course bring their action, and we should have a chance of getting at something definite by cross-examination. Wise beyond the wisest of all time, Blank never committed himself to paper; that is, notwithstanding he was so voluminous a writer, he left no scrap of his own handwriting behind him, except the signature to certain law documents. He was a practical man; and while taking care that all legal requirements should be satisfied, he made no provision for Sentiment whatever. If he ever cut his name on a tree, he cut the tree down afterwards. If he ever sowed it in mustard and cress, he took care to eat the salad. The more I consider this matter, the more I am convinced that Blank had a presentiment of the Committee and the branch-line. He actually caused these lines to be written over his grave:

Blese be ye man y<sup>t</sup> spares thes stones,  
And curst be he y<sup>t</sup> moves my bones.

Otherwise, we should have had his bones up long

ago, and arranged them nicely in a glass case. All the great men that have ever lived since his time (with the exception of George IV.) have come to Asterisk, and written their names wherever they could find room upon the walls of his birth-chamber. His cradle, it is true, is not preserved, but 'all reason and analogy unite to shew' that this must have been the exact spot where he first saw the light. *The house belonged to his own father*, a statement italicised because attested; and this was the apartment most probably used for such domestic occurrences. Therefore, when Jones inquired confidentially of the very respectable lady-custodian whether 'there really was any direct evidence' of Blank's having been brought into the world in that particular room, he not only hurt her feelings, but flew in the face of the facts. It is due to Brown and myself to say that we at once apologised for this needless and inexcusable barbarity upon the part of our companion, who (we explained) makes money by mathematics. I would not have had her know that he was also a clergyman for twice the value of the admission fee; for such a confession must have either shaken her faith in the Establishment or in Blank himself. She on her part was sufficiently generous not to make public what had occurred, for otherwise Jones might have been torn to pieces at Asterisk, and sent to Wooten-wawen to be devoured.

If there was nothing in the sacred tenement which had been absolutely Blank's, yet there was much indirectly associated with him; all the editions of his works, for instance, and almost all the fancy portraits of him. I say fancy portraits advisedly. Blank was the incarnation of Fancy, and a very many-featured man. If not, we must come to the conclusion that his sagacious prescience determined to baffle the Committee not only in the matter of manuscripts, but also in that of pictures, for there is quite a gallery of them extant, and none of them alike. There is also a bust upon his tomb quite different from the pictures. The famous theory of 'undesigned coincidence' is reversed in this case; and I leave it to the German critics (who have lost themselves again and again in the Blank maze) whether some system of 'designed nonconformity' may not be instituted to explain everything yet. This (I must say) ingenious suggestion has certainly never occurred to the inhabitants of Asterisk itself. They imagine that the more immediately they can identify themselves with their tutelary genius the better. Half of them are Blanks by name. All of them make capital out of Blank. There is the *Blank Arms* open to receive you, and the Blank Distillery to supply it with spirits in which to drink his immortal memory. I regret to add that over a very small establishment in a by-street is an inscription setting forth that superior Blank lemonade is to be procured within at three-halfpence a bottle. It is perfectly sure—whatever else may be obscure about him—that Blank detested lemonade and all such 'wish-wash,' and has therefore no sort of connection with this establishment. I noticed also 'Blank Dips' very prominently advertised; whereas we have evidence to prove that Blank patronised the oil called 'midnight oil,' and not dips.

At the inn already alluded to, there is religiously preserved a parlour, a chair, and even a poker, once made use of, not indeed actually by Blank, but by a gentleman of literary reputation who came to worship at his shrine during the present

century. Jones, always sceptical (except of course with respect to professional matters), indulged in fits of mirth over these sacred relics. The words 'Wiggle's Poker' inscribed upon that article affected him to tears of laughter. For my part, I never saw so disgraceful an exhibition; but Brown rather encouraged him than otherwise; and when the imperturbable waiting-maid brought in a cold Blank pie, I thought they would both have choked over it. It was market-day, and the windows were open, and I was really alarmed lest we should become objects of popular vengeance. It would be in vain, I knew, to attempt to convince the good people that Brown and Jones revered Blank at heart most cordially, and indeed resented the local absurdities committed in his name upon that very account; with the Asteriskites, the exact contrary was the case; they had probably never read a line of his works; but they believed in the Poker business implicitly. We should certainly be put to death, if our lives depended upon our explanation of the matter being understood by them; and I besought my friends to moderate their transports, until at least we had got on to the main line of railway. But they only made dumb motions towards the Pie and the Poker, and gasped and gurgled in reply. This was not a frame of mind in which to seek out the other associations of the place; and I took them to the Church at once, in hopes to sober them. 'There, at least,' thought I, 'Jones is sure to conduct himself with propriety, and even Brown will probably abstain from ribaldry.' But by this time there had grown up in both my companions an unreasonable but most virulent antipathy to everything relating to the local lion. They murmured against me; protested that they would not stand anything more (as though they had treated me to luncheon, which they had not); and expressed a vehement desire to leave 'the blessed place' [I use Brown's words], 'and have done with it,' although there was so much more yet to be seen. In the churchyard—to give you an idea of Brown's state of mind—I stopped a moment, and observed (I think impressively): 'Well, it at least is certain that Blank must have looked with his own eyes at this very edifice at which we ourselves are now gazing!'

'And who the deuce cares whether he did or not?' was the brutal reply.

Even Jones was shocked at this, and called Brown to order for using in such a locality the word 'deuce'; upon the meaning and derivation of which so sharp a controversy ensued between them, that Brown walked straight back again to the inn, declaring that he had left his umbrella there, which was of more value to him than any Blankean association whatever, and, moreover, genuine. The last word, in particular, he pronounced with a most fiendish emphasis, accompanied with an unseemly wink; and so we parted, Jones and I to Church, Brown to the Alehouse—a type, perhaps (if I did but possess Blank's genius to convey it), of our respective lives.

After the church, there was Blank's other house to be explored, which is Asterisk's rival attraction to the birthplace. The latter, as has been shewn, is in good preservation, and has everything fitting about it, except direct evidence of Blank's having been born there; the other mansion was most undoubtedly once his residence, but unfortunately nothing of the original tenement remains. Do I say nothing? Let me not do Asterisk and the Committee wrong. There are half-a-dozen large

stones placed under cucumber-frames—and, indeed, I really thought they *were* cucumbers—which are said to be the ORIGINAL FOUNDATIONS.

While Jones and I were regarding these interesting relics, and especially their glass cases, with unfeigned admiration, and expressing our pity for poor Brown, whose unhappy temper had caused him to miss them, a polite individual came from the house, and invited us to walk in. It had not been exactly Blank's residence, he admitted, but it had been always allowed to stand upon a portion of the very spot where that edifice had stood: even looked upon in that light, the house had naturally possessed a surpassing interest for all to whom the name of Blank was dear; but something had been discovered of late—within a few days, in fact, of our present visit—which, it was not too much to say, would delight the civilised world. We were fortunate in being among the first five hundred persons who had been privileged to witness it. It had been brought to light by the merest accident—one of those trifles upon which so often hang affairs of the gravest moment; but there it was.

'But what is it, my good sir?' inquired Jones.

'You must see the house first,' returned the polite individual; 'you will find *that* not without an interest of its own; and last and best of all, you shall be made acquainted with THE GREAT DISCOVERY.'

With palpitating hearts, we accordingly followed our conductor. My own impression was that Blank's private Study had been discovered—his chosen place for composition—in the most satisfactory state of preservation, and containing his favourite desk, perhaps with an unfinished manuscript in it. Jones pictured to himself some equally attractive spectacle. In the meantime, we traversed room after room, which, if they had 'an interest of their own,' had certainly none for us, and ascended stair after stair until we reached an attic chamber.

'Be prepared,' said the polite individual in a solemn voice. 'It was here that the Secret was discovered.'

There was nothing in the room whatever; but at the further end of it was a wooden partition, with apparently a couple of cupboards in it.

With a stately motion of the hand, we were waved towards these recesses. 'They have been made,' explained our conductor, 'expressly for the accommodation of the Public, in order that more than one person might be gratified at the same time.'

With trembling hands, Jones and myself each opened a cupboard, and reverently looked within. If we had been less respectful, we should have run our heads against a brick-wall that was within a foot or so of the apertures.

'I can see nothing,' complained Jones; and indeed it was almost pitch dark.

'Do you not see a wall before you?' inquired our conductor with the air of a man who has a great treat in store.

'Yes, I see a wall,' said Jones discontentedly.

'You are now beholding the Veritable Original GABLE END of Blank's own house,' said the polite individual. 'It was discovered only a few days back, when we were making some alterations in the premises.'

Although it was dark in the cupboard, Jones and I could see one another inside it by means of the light behind us, and unbeheld by our conductor, we now exchanged glances of indescribable

meaning. My friend was purple, and his shoulders were convulsed with a perfect paroxysm of mirth. I knew that if he moved, he must needs burst into roar after roar of inextinguishable laughter, which would be very embarrassing to the polite individual whose invited guests we were. There was nothing for it, therefore, but for us both to remain in our ridiculous positions. No doubt attributing our delay to satisfaction at the spectacle afforded to us, our host proceeded: 'In consequence of this remarkable and unprecedented discovery of the Gable End, a National Subscription is about to be set on foot to secure it in perpetuity for the British public. A shilling apiece is accordingly demanded'—

'What!' exclaimed Jones, withdrawing from the aperture a countenance suddenly sobered by the threat of pecuniary exaction. 'You don't mean to say you are going to charge for looking at a Dead Wall?'

'The original Gable End of the house of the Immortal Blank, sir,' returned the polite individual with dignity, 'can scarcely be considered to be a Dead Wall.'

We paid our shillings, and departed from this interesting edifice without further remonstrance.

'It is this sort of thing,' observed I philosophically,

'Which makes it seem more sweet to be  
The little life of bank and brier,  
The bird that pipes his lone desire,  
And dies unheard within his tree,

Than he that warbles long and loud,  
And drops at Glory's temple-gates,  
For whom the carrion vulture waits,  
To tear his heart before the crowd.'

'Just so,' returned Jones. 'It is a satisfaction to reflect, that when you and I are gone, Robinson, *our* Gable Ends will not be similarly exhibited. However, here is the railway station, and Brown with his recovered umbrella. We must take care to impress him with the idea that we have been enchanted with what he has missed.'

But we found Brown not at all impressionable upon this point; and when we pressed him at least to promise some pecuniary help towards the National Subscription for purchasing Blank's original Gable End, he gave impassioned utterance to the following reply: 'No, I'll not do that; but I tell you *what* I'll do: I am ready to give a good round sum towards bursting up the whole concern.' By which we understood him to mean not only the Gable End, but Asterisk and the Committee, the Branch-line, the Chair and Poker, and all the rest of the Exhibition.

## DEW.

THERE are few phenomena of common occurrence which have proved more perplexing to philosophers than those which attend the deposition of dew. Every one is familiar with these phenomena, and in very early times observant men had noticed them; yet it is but quite recently that the true theory of dew has been put forward and established. This theory affords a striking evidence of the value of careful and systematic observation applied even to the simplest phenomena of nature.

It was observed, in very early times, that dew is only formed on clear nights, when, therefore, the

stars are shining. It was natural, perhaps, though hardly philosophical, to conclude that dew is directly shed down upon the earth from the stars; accordingly, we find the reference of dew to stellar influences among the earliest theories propounded in explanation of the phenomenon.

A theory somewhat less fanciful, but still depending on supposed stellar influences, was shortly put forward. It was observed that dew is only formed when the atmosphere is at a low temperature; or, more correctly, when the air is at a much lower temperature than has prevailed during the daytime. Combining this peculiarity with the former, ancient philosophers reasoned in the following manner: Cold generates dew, and dew appears only when the skies are clear—that is, when the stars are shining; hence it follows that the stars generate cold, and thus lead indirectly to the formation of dew. Hence arose the singular theory, that as the sun pours down heat upon the earth, so the stars (and also the moon and planets) pour down cold.

Nothing is more common—we may note in passing—than this method of philosophising, especially in all that concerns weather-changes; and perhaps it would be impossible to find a more signal instance of the mistakes into which men are likely to fall when they adopt this false method of reasoning; for, so far is it from being true that the stars shed cold upon the earth, that the exact converse is the case. It has been established by astronomers and physicists that an important portion of the earth's heat-supply is derived from the stars.

Following on these bizarre theories came Aristotle's theory of dew—celebrated as one of the most remarkable instances of the approximation which may sometimes be made to the truth by clever reasoning on insufficient observations; for we must not fall into the mistake of supposing, as many have done, that he framed hypotheses without making observations; indeed, there has seldom lived a philosopher who has made more observations than Aristotle. His mistake was that he extended his observations too widely, not making enough on each subject. He imagined that, by a string of syllogisms, he could make a few supply the place of many observations.

Aristotle added two important facts to our knowledge respecting dew—namely, first, that dew is only formed in serene weather; and secondly, that it is not formed on the summits of mountains. Modern observations shew the more correct statement of the case to be, that dew is *seldom* formed either in windy weather or on the tops of mountains. Now, Aristotle reasoned in a subtle and able manner on these two observations. He saw that dew must be the result of processes which are interfered with when the air is agitated, and which do not extend high above the earth's surface; he conjectured, therefore, that dew is simply caused by the discharge of vapour from the air. Vapour is a mixture, he said, of water and heat, and as long as water can get a supply of heat, vapour rises. But vapour cannot rise high, or the heat would get detached from it; and vapour cannot exist in windy weather, but becomes dissipated. Hence, in high places, and in windy weather, dew cannot be formed for want of vapour. He derided the notion that the stars and moon cause the precipitation of dew. 'On the contrary, the sun,' he said, 'is the cause; since its heat raises the vapour

from which the dew is formed, when that heat is no longer present to keep up the vapour.'

Amidst much that is false, there is here a good deal that is sound. The notion that heat is some substance which floats up the vapour, and may become detached from it in high or windy places, is of course incorrect. So also is the supposition that the dew is produced by the *fall* of condensed vapour as the heat passes away. Nor is it correct to say that the absence of the sun causes the condensation of vapour, since, as we shall presently see, the cold which causes the deposition of dew results from more than the mere absence of the sun. But, in pointing out that the discharge of vapour from the air, owing to loss of heat, is the true cause of the deposition of dew, Aristotle expressed an important truth. It was when he attempted to account for the discharge that he failed. It will be observed, also, that his explanation does not account for the observed fact, that dew is only formed in clear weather.

Aristotle's views did not find acceptance among the Greeks or Romans; they preferred to look on the moon, stars, and planets as the agents which cause the deposition of dew. 'This notion,' says a modern author, 'was too beautiful for a Greek to give up, and the Romans could not do better than follow the example of their masters.'

In the middle ages, despite the credit attached to Aristotle's name, those who cultivated the physical sciences were unwilling to accept his views; for the alchemists (who alone may be said to have been students of nature) founded their hopes of success in the search for the philosopher's stone, the *elixir vite*, and the other objects of their pursuit, on occult influences supposed to be exercised by the celestial bodies. It was unlikely, therefore, that they would willingly reject the ancient theory which ascribed dew to lunar and stellar radiations.

But at length Baptista Porta adduced evidence which justified him in denying positively that the moon or stars exercise any influence on the formation of dew. He discovered that dew is sometimes deposited on the inside of glass panes; and, again, that a bell-glass placed over a plant in cold weather is more copiously covered with dew within than without; nay, he observed that even some opaque substances shew dew on their *under* surface when none appears on the upper. Yet, singularly enough, Baptista Porta rejected that part of Aristotle's theory which was alone correct. He thought his observations justified him in looking on dew as condensed—not from vapour, as Aristotle thought—but from the air itself.

But now a new theory of dew began to be supported. We have seen that not only the believers in stellar influence, but Aristotle also, looked on dew as falling from above. Porta's experiments were opposed to this view. It seemed rather as if dew rose from the earth. Observation also shewed that the amount of dew obtained at different heights from the ground diminishes with the height. Hence, the new theorists looked upon dew as an exhalation from the ground and from plants—a fine steam, as it were rising upwards, and settling principally on the under surfaces of objects.

But this view, like the others, was destined to be overthrown. Muschenbroek, when engaged in a series of observations intended to establish the new view, made a discovery which has a very



important bearing on the theory of dew: he found that, instead of being deposited with tolerable uniformity upon different substances—as falling rain is, for instance, and as the rising rain imagined by the new theorists ought to be—dew forms very much more freely on some substances than on others.

Here was a difficulty which long perplexed physicists. It appeared that dew neither fell from the sky nor arose from the earth. The object itself on which the dew was formed seemed to play an important part in determining the amount of deposition.

At length it was suggested that Aristotle's long neglected explanation might, with a slight change, account for the observed phenomena. The formation of dew was now looked upon as a discharge of vapour from the air, this discharge not taking place necessarily upwards or downwards, but always from the air next to the object. But it was easy to test this view. It was understood that the coldness of the object, as compared with the air, was a necessary element in the phenomenon. It followed, that if a cold object is suddenly brought into warm air, there ought to be a deposition of moisture upon the object. This was found to be the case. Any one can readily determine this for himself. If a decanter of ice-cold water is brought into a warm room, in which the air is not dry—a crowded room, for example—the deposition of moisture is immediately detected by the clouding of the glass. But there is, in fact, a much simpler experiment. When we exhale, the moisture in the breath generally continues in the form of vapour. But if we breathe upon a window-pane, the vapour is immediately condensed, because the glass is considerably colder than the exhaled air.

But although this is the correct view, and though physicists had made a noteworthy advance in getting rid of erroneous notions, yet a theory of dew still remained to be formed; for it was not yet shewn how the cold, which causes the deposition of dew, is itself occasioned. The remarkable effects of a clear sky and serene weather in encouraging the formation of dew, were also still unaccounted for. On the explanation of these and similar points, the chief interest of the subject depends. Science owes the elucidation of these difficulties to Dr Wells, a London physician, who studied the subject of dew in the commencement of the present century. His observations were made in a garden three miles from Blackfriars Bridge.

Wells exposed little bundles of wool, weighing, when dry, ten grains each, and determined by their increase in weight the amount of moisture which had been deposited upon them. At first, he confined himself to comparing the amount of moisture collected on different nights. He found that although it was an invariable rule that cloudy nights were unfavourable to the deposition of dew, yet that on some of the very clearest and most serene nights, less dew was collected than on other occasions. Hence it became evident that mere clearness was not the only circumstance which favoured the deposition of dew. In making these experiments, he was struck by results which appeared to be anomalous. He soon found that these anomalies were caused by any obstructions which hid the heavens from his wool-packs: such obstructions hindered the

deposition of dew. He tried a crucial experiment. Having placed a board on four props, he laid one piece of wool on the board, and another under it. During a clear night, he found that the difference in the amount of dew deposited on the two pieces of wool was remarkable: the upper one gained fourteen grains in weight, the lower one gained only four grains. He made a little roof over one piece of wool, with a sheet of pasteboard; and the increase of weight was reduced to two grains, while a piece of wool outside the roof gained no less than sixteen grains in weight.

Leaving these singular results unexplained for a while, Dr Wells next proceeded to test the temperature near his wool-packs. He found that where dew is most copiously produced, there the temperature is lowest. Now, since it is quite clear that the deposition of dew was not the cause of the increased cold—for the condensation of vapour is a process producing heat—it became quite clear that the formation of dew is dependent on and proportional to the loss of heat.

And now Wells was approaching the solution of the problem he had set himself; for it followed from his observations, that such obstructions as the propped board and the pasteboard roof kept in the heat. It followed also, from the observed effects of clear skies, that clouds keep in the heat. Now, what sort of heat is that which is prevented from escaping by the interference of screens, whether material or vaporous? There are three processes by which heat is transmitted from one body to another—these are, conduction, convection, and radiation. The first is the process by which objects in contact communicate their heat to each other, or by which the heat in one part of a body is gradually transmitted to another part. The second is the process by which heat is carried from one place to another by the absolute transmission of heated matter. The third is that process by which heat is spread out in all directions, in the same manner as light. A little consideration will shew that the last process is that with which we are alone concerned; and this important result flows from Dr Wells' experiments, that the rate of the deposition of dew depends on the rate at which bodies part with their heat by radiation. If the process of radiation is checked, dew is less copiously deposited, and vice versa.

When we consider the case of heat accompanied by light, we understand readily enough that a screen may interfere with the emission of radiant heat. We use a fire-screen, for instance, with the object of producing just such an interference. But we are apt to forget that what is true of luminous heat is true also of that heat which every substance possesses. In fact, we do not meet with many instances in which the effect of screens in preventing the loss of obscure heat is very noteworthy. There are some, as the warmth of a greenhouse at night, and so on; but they pass unnoticed, or are misunderstood. It was in this way that the explanation of dew-phenomena had been so long delayed. The very law on which it is founded had been practically applied, while its meaning had not been recognised. 'I had often, in the pride of half-knowledge,' says Wells, 'smiled at the means frequently employed by gardeners to protect tender plants from cold, as it appeared to me impossible that a thin mat, or any such flimsy substance, could prevent them from attaining the temperature of the atmosphere, by which alone I

thought them liable to be injured. But when I had seen that bodies on the surface of the earth become, during a still and serene night, colder than the atmosphere, by radiating their heat to the heavens, I perceived immediately a just reason for the practice which I had before deemed useless.'

And now all the facts which had before seemed obscure were accounted for. It had been noticed that metallic plates were often dry when grass or wood was copiously moistened. Now, we know that metals part unwillingly with their heat by radiation, and therefore the temperature of a metal plate exposed in the open air is considerably higher than that of a neighbouring piece of wood. For a similar reason, dew is more freely deposited on grass than on gravel. Glass, again, is a good radiator, so that dew is freely deposited on glass objects—a circumstance which is very annoying to the telescopist. The remedy employed is founded on Wells' observations—a cylinder of tin or card, called a dew-cap, is made to project beyond the glass, and thus to act as a screen, and prevent radiation.

We can now also interpret the effects of a clear sky. Clouds act the part of screens, and check the emission of radiant heat from the earth. This fact had been noticed before, but misinterpreted, by Gilbert White of Selborne. 'I have often observed,' he says, 'that cold seems to descend from above; for when a thermometer hangs abroad on a frosty night, the intervention of a cloud shall immediately raise the mercury ten degrees, and a clear sky shall again compel it to descend to its former gauge.' Another singular mistake had been made with reference to the power which clouds possess of checking the emission of radiant heat. It had been observed that on moonlit nights the eyes are apt to suffer in a peculiar way, which has occasionally brought on temporary blindness. This had been ascribed to the moon's influence, and the term moon-blindness had therefore been given to the affection. In reality, the moon has no more to do with this form of blindness than the stars have to do with the formation of dew. The absence of clouds from the air is the true cause of the mischief. There is no sufficient check to the radiation of heat from the eyeballs, and the consequent chill results in temporary loss of sight, and sometimes even in permanent injury.

Since clouds possess this important power, it is clear that while they are present in the air there can never be a copious formation of dew, which requires, as we have seen, a considerable fall in the temperature of the air around the place of deposition. When the air is clear, however, radiation proceeds rapidly, and therefore dew is freely formed.

But it might seem that since objects in the upper regions of the air part with their radiant heat more freely than objects on the ground, the former should be more copiously moistened with dew than the latter. That the fact is exactly the reverse is thus explained. The cold which is produced by the radiation of heat from objects high in the air is communicated to the surrounding air, which, growing heavier, descends towards the ground, its place being supplied by warmer air. Thus, the object is prevented from reducing the air in its immediate neighbourhood to so low a temperature as would be attained if this process of circulation were checked. Hence, a concave vessel placed below an object high in air, would serve to

increase the deposition of dew by preventing the transfer of the refrigerated air. We are not aware that the experiment has ever been tried, but undoubtedly it would have the effect we have described. An object on the ground grows cold more rapidly, because the neighbouring air cannot descend after being chilled, but continues in contact with the object; also cold air is continually descending from the neighbourhood of objects higher in air which are parting with their radiant heat, and the cold air thus descending takes the place of warmer air, whose neighbourhood might otherwise tend to check the loss of heat in objects on the ground.

Here, also, we recognise the cause of the second peculiarity detected by Aristotle—namely, that dew is only formed copiously in serene weather. When there is wind, it is impossible that the refrigerated air, around an object which is parting with its radiant heat, can remain long in contact with the object. Fresh air is continually supplying the place of the refrigerated air, and thus the object is prevented from growing so cold as it otherwise would.

In conclusion, we should wish to point out the important preservative influence exercised during the formation of dew. If the heat which is radiated from the earth, or from objects upon it, during a clear night, were not repaired in any way, the most serious injury would result to vegetation. For instance, if the sun raised no vapour during the day, so that when night came on the air was perfectly dry, and thus the radiant heat passed away into celestial space without compensation, not a single form of vegetation could retain its life during the bitter cold which would result. But consider what happens. The sun's heat, which has been partly used up during the day, in supplying the air with aqueous vapour, is gradually given out as this vapour returns to the form of water. Thus, the process of refrigeration is effectually checked, and vegetation is saved from destruction. Surely there is something very beautiful in this. During the day, the sun seems to pour forth his heat with reckless profusion, yet all the while it is being silently stored up; during the night, again, the earth seems to be radiating her heat too rapidly into space, yet all the while a process is going on by which the loss of heat is adequately compensated. Every particle of dew which we brush from the blades of grass, as we take our morning rambles, is an evidence of the preservative action of nature.

## FOUND DEAD.

### CHAPTER XI.—A TÊTE-À-TÊTE WITH MR MELLISH.

THE gift of good looks is of such primary advantage to every man, that it seems a wonder how ugly people manage so frequently to excel those who have it, in the battle of life. To many, however, fortunately for the ill-looking, its very possession is like that of inherited wealth, and cripples exertion; with the stream and tide of the world's favour so clearly with them, they flatter themselves that they can rest upon their oars, and drift to Fortune. And when to good looks are added pleasant manners and kindly ways, the Young at least can really almost afford to do this. Mr Frederick Blissett, whether mad, as the rector had hinted, or not, had certainly the brains to apprehend what

sober common-sense would never have hit upon, when he sent down Charles Steen as his envoy to Morden Hall. There were reasons which made it no disadvantage, but rather the contrary, that the young man was almost a total stranger to him; ignorant of his past, and especially of its relation to his deceased brother: and he calculated, justly, upon his ambassador's making an agreeable impression, with a favourable reflex action upon himself. If we have failed to do Mr Charles Steen justice in our description of him, our shortcoming in that respect may be excused, since the attractiveness of look and manner is just what words can never describe; but he possessed it in perfection. It is probable that even Mrs Mangoe would have favoured him, if he had not chanced to have been adopted by her husband; that Mr Curtis, porter and deputy-master of the Refuge, was prejudiced against him, was a tribute to his powers of pleasing, for a brutal and sullen nature is as antagonistic to its contrary as vice to virtue. At Morden Hall, where hearts were set wide by affliction, and made sensitive to delicate condolence—unintrusive sympathy—Charles Steen, first admitted as a doubtful friend (and only in that semi-favourable position, through the rector's good report of him), was soon welcomed on his own account, as a genuine well-wisher. The servants liked him (though we don't know how this would have been if they had known he had so lately partaken of the hospitalities of Mr Curtis) for his gracious behaviour and carefulness to avoid giving trouble; and if the mistress of the house could not bring herself to spare his patron, she had sufficiently shewed that her animosity did not extend to his messenger; while her very displeasure had caused, as we have seen, a sort of confidential relation to be established between Miss Christie and himself. This last circumstance did not, we may be sure, weaken that resolve, which his own nature had suggested, to do the widow and her daughter as much good service with his patron as he could effect. He wrote Mr Blissett a few lines by post on the evening of his arrival, which, while conveying the facts, placed them in the light which he thought most likely to be favourable to the interests of his hostess. He assured him that she would by no means take it ill if he should not feel sufficiently recovered from his indisposition to attend the funeral in person; but, on the contrary, that she seemed averse to his incurring any risk in so doing; and that he had himself been permitted to see Mrs Blissett, he ascribed solely to her respect for her brother-in-law: 'Even if you were to come,' he wrote, 'I doubt whether she would feel herself equal to an interview; for, as you will easily understand, it was (as much, perhaps, as her esteem for yourself) the very fact of my being a stranger, unknown to her late husband, and in no way associated with his memory, which made my presence endurable; and even as it was, the poor lady was scarcely mistress of herself.' He was reticent in his account of Mr Mellish, rightly judging that any praise of him would be unacceptable to his correspondent, and having nothing to communicate to his discredit. The day fixed for the funeral he did not mention, lest, by some evil chance, Mr Blissett should come down after all; but the postscript stated that the inquest was to be held on the next day but one. In short, if our diplomatists were born, instead of being made out of the younger branches of noble families, Mr

Charles Steen shewed promise of becoming one day addressed as His Excellency.

On the night of his arrival at Allgrove, he dined, as we have seen, with Mr Mellish at the Hall; but the next day he was his guest at the rectory. The good parson took compassion upon the young fellow—a stranger in that house of mourning, and of course condemned to a solitary table, the widow and her daughter taking their joyless meals together—if, indeed, the former ate at all—up-stairs. Miss Christie, while wearing that white woe upon her face, which is the deepest mourning human features can put on, was yet not neglectful of her mother's guest. The offices of hospitality were paid by her, as it seemed to the recipient, with an unequalled grace. Twice during the next day she saw him, and each time bore some kind though trivial message from the widow.

'I am ashamed to think,' said the young man modestly, 'that my involuntary presence here should be even remembered by her at such a time.'

'Nay, Mr Steen, it is good for her just now,' returned Christie simply. 'She reproaches herself with having behaved with seeming harshness towards you yesterday (although I told her you thought nothing of it), after you had said you had not a friend in the world. Moreover (and chiefly), dear papa' (her sad eyes swimming in tears) 'was hospitality itself, and my mother would not have that virtue die with him.'

That was almost the sole direct allusion which Christie made to her father in the young man's hearing; but all other tongues in the household, and even in the village, talked of him almost unceasingly. Knots of people hung about the little inn, where the body lay, conversing about him in hushed tones. Any stranger, who, riding through the place, drew rein at the door of the *Rising Sun*, was sure to have the accident described to him. The first salutation of one from some neighbour hamlet, when he reached Allgrove and met an inhabitant, was: 'Well, this is a sad business indeed about the squire;' and the inquest itself was a subject of which the villagers never tired. The young stranger at the Hall gave rise to not a few surmises. Some of that large class to whom the only intelligible topics of talk are Death and Marriage, would have it that he was Miss Christie's accepted lover—they had deemed her but a child last week—come to comfort the family in their calamity by his presence; but the majority understood that he was in some way connected with the squire's brother and heir-at-law. It was no discredit to their sagacity that they could not realise his position, since he did not fully comprehend it himself; but their guesses were wide enough of the mark. One unflattering suggestion was, that he was a sort of man in possession, sent down to see that the widow did not carry off anything belonging to the new proprietor. Perhaps it was natural at such a season that the successor of Frank Blissett should not be popular; but certainly the universal opinion was dead against him. Mr Frederick was 'one of them London chaps;' he was 'a wild Indian'—this was a composite verdict, a condemnation of his moral qualities, associated with an ethnological mistake—he was 'little better than a heathen.' There were two (excellent) reasons for this last assertion—first, the good folks at Allgrove, though totally ignorant of theological dogma, were great sticklers for it, and Mr Frederick, during his unfrequent visits at the Hall, had offended public



opinion by absenting himself from church; secondly, his profession as a painter seemed to some (although they did not openly confess it) as a breach of the second commandment.

The rector (though he had expressed his own views so freely to Mr Lane, his equal) strove, as in duty bound, to combat this prejudice in the parish against the man who, whatever were his shortcomings, was now the squire of Allgrove. His mode of defence was characteristic, but not always successful. He would make some apt quotation from Shakespeare, to which the rustic mind generally succumbed, uncertain whether the injunction did not proceed from Holy Writ; or he would produce some far-fetched historical example of those who, being unexpectedly called to greatness, have disappointed the forebodings of their detractors.

'There was Nicholas West,' explained he to Mr Groves, the principal tenant on the Morden estate, and who, having known Mr Frederick Blissett from his youth up, so far as his days had been passed at Allgrove, had not formed any high expectations of him as a man and a landlord—'There was Nicholas West, we must remember, whose life at college was so lawless that he even set fire to the master's lodge, and yet who afterwards became Bishop of Ely, and one of the most exemplary of prelates.'

'Well, sir,' answered Mr Groves, scratching his head, 'I don't say as Mr Frederick ever set fire to the master's lodge' (meaning the gate-keeper's cottage), 'though I do think he would ha' been equal to that, if he had been much crossed; but, as long as he lives—and you may take my word for it—he'll never be Bishop of Ely; no, nor of anywheres else.'

The rector, unselfish in his pleasures, yet, having no (appreciative) ear in Allgrove to which to confide this admirable rejoinder, related it to his young guest at dinner; and their conversation once turned upon the new squire's character, continued to flow in that channel—not, however, be it understood, to Mr Frederick Blissett's discredit. Charles Steen, although silent in the railway carriage, had too much good feeling to have permitted any depreciation of his patron at any man's table, even if his host had had the ill taste to indulge in it. But, indeed, Mr Mellish sought to offer excuses for the painter, rather than to condemn him. Frederick Blissett had been the darling of his mother, who had done her best to spoil him from the cradle, and, as generally happens, had only too well succeeded. She had exaggerated his talents, flattered his egotism, and, what was worse, had always expressed her abhorrence of the injustice of that law of entail which gave his elder brother so much, while it left him so little. His father devised the estate, as country gentlemen often do, to his eldest son and his heirs-male. Thus, now Frank was dead, Frederick succeeded; nor would one acre revert to poor Miss Christie, unless her uncle died without a son, in which case the property would return to the female branch. Thus, the will that seemed to the late Mrs Blissett to perpetrate an injustice upon Frederick, had in the end benefited the younger at the expense of the only child of the elder.

With respect to the past, at the late Mrs Blissett's death, which occurred after that of her husband, Frederick inherited her little fortune, most of which, however, he had already anticipated.

He had chosen for his profession military life in India, in a sudden fit of pique or passion with his brother Frank (who was sincerely sorry that his only relative should thus self-exile himself), and in a regiment notoriously fast, was known as the most extravagant of subalterns. The climate and his mode of life combined shattered his health as well as emptied his purse. His brother Frank's offers of pecuniary aid were at that time rejected, and Frederick had to leave the army. Then he contrived to obtain some appointment in the Civil Service, which, in its turn, he also had to relinquish. At last, he came home, and took up with painting, an art to which he had been always greatly devoted; and a reconciliation having been effected between the brothers, the purse-strings of the squire were opened widely to assist him.

'His paintings are very striking,' observed Steen; 'at least, they seem to me so, though I know nothing about such matters.'

'They are striking,' assented the rector readily. 'Though we cannot say

His pencilled figures are  
Even such as they give out;

for they represent giants, and not men; yet his conceptions are really fine. He has real genius, if it be somewhat morbid.'

'The colouring is marvellous.'

'Well, yes, my dear young sir; but I am not sure that that is high praise. You should have seen the charcoal sketches—they are still on the old nursery-walls, by the by—which he made when he was quite a lad.'

'He sketches still in that way, sir, but in chalks mostly.'

'He can sketch with anything, Mr Steen, even with a hot poker. See here.' The rector drew forth from a cupboard in his parlour a large board, as broad as an inn sign. The picture on it was but burned in, as he described, yet it represented with amazing vigour and rude force the Furies with their hair

Of intertwined fibres, serpentine,  
Upcoiling and inveterately convolved.

'This he gave to me before he went to India; and when I told him it was far too large for my little house, he said: "Hang it up in the church, then." A nice subject for an altar-piece, upon my word! The fact is, Mr Steen—as you might have overheard me say to Mr Lane yesterday, as we came down in the train—there was always a screw loose in Master Frederick. His art and wit were both perverse; and the suns and the brandy pawnee of India did not go to cure him. We must all, therefore, make allowances for him as much as we can. Now, there is one question I wish to ask you, which, of course, you need not answer unless you like, and will not, if it involves any breach of confidence. Have you heard Mr Blissett say anything about his sister-in-law's future—whether he intends to do anything for her, I mean, in a pecuniary way?'

'He expressed a particular wish to be of assistance to her; and as to Miss Christie: "I am naturally zealous on her account," he said, "being her uncle."'

'A little more than kin, and less than kind,' murmured the rector under his breath. 'Ah,' said he coldly, 'he did not hint at any annual allowance, then?'



'No, he did not.'

'Nor as to when they will have to move into the cottage yonder?' He pointed over his shoulder to indicate Rill Bank, the garden of which sloped down to the river, next to his own. 'Well, I wish you would procure that information from him, as I, being Mrs Blissett's trustee, shall have to arrange with its present tenant, in case they have to remove at once. You may say that I put the question, if you please.—Must you go? What! at nine o'clock? Ah, they keep early hours at the Hall now, of course. Dear, dear! I remember when that used to be the most difficult house to get away from in the county. "Why not all sleep here?" used to be the squire's cry. And in the old times, many a guest remained who only came to dine. Since poor Mrs Blissett's misfortune, Frank's parties broke up at ten, lest her nights should be disturbed. I wish, for her sake, that to-morrow were past, and the next day also, when he is to be put in his grave.'

They were standing at the rectory door in the village street. Early as it then was, no one was abroad; nothing was heard but the sighing of the wintry wind among the naked trees, and the creaking of the inn sign in its iron frame.

'God bless you!' said Mr Mellish fervently, as he bade his guest good-bye. 'I fear I am not a very cheerful host just now; but still I hope you will come here again to-morrow. The Hall will then have that substantial sorrow in it, which to the young is so oppressive. And remember, I shall be glad to see you whenever you like.'

Charles thanked the rector warmly, but he little guessed how soon he was fated to take advantage of his invitation.

#### CHAPTER XII.—THE RECTOR AND THE DOCTOR.

When Charles Steen came down to his solitary breakfast next morning, laid, as usual, under the evil eye of King Boleslaus, he found a letter from his patron awaiting him.

'MY DEAR SIR,' it ran, 'Perhaps, after all, I have been too hasty. Upon reflection, indeed, I am satisfied such is the case; and the more so since there can be but one decision arrived at by the jury. Just telegraph A. D. (for "Accidental Death"), when they have so pronounced upon it.—The weather here is wretched.—Yours,  
FRED BLISSETT.'

It was a fancy of the painter's, even when corresponding with comparative strangers, to sign his Christian name thus abbreviated, although nobody, save the late squire, ever called him Fred. With Christie herself, he was always Uncle Frederick in full. But it was not the signature of the letter which awakened Charles Steen's astonishment; its contents left no room for wonder at anything but them. Was he dreaming? Did he read aright? Or had that eccentricity in his patron's character, to which Mr Mellish had referred last night, developed suddenly into downright madness? Fearing lest Miss Christie should presently come down, and question him as to whether he had heard from her uncle, and feeling really in great need of counsel, the young man thrust the letter in his pocket, and hurried down through the November drizzle to the rectory. It was rather late in the morning, but Mr Mellish had not yet risen from the breakfast-table. It was the good parson's wont to burn

the midnight oil, and save the morning sun; and, besides, on this particular occasion he had a guest with him—a strange-looking little old gentleman, in decidedly old-fashioned clothes, who was introduced to Charles as Dr Fungus.

'We are very glad to see you, young gentleman,' observed this individual, nodding at him with much familiarity. '"Two are company, and three are none," says the proverb; but if the two are *bad* company, and are quarrelling like Kilkenny cats, the third is a relief; and that's just our case.'

As Mr Mellish smiled grimly, but made no attempt to controvert this statement, it seemed to be a correct one.

'Nothing the matter at the Hall, I hope, Mr Steen?—that is, more than has already happened, which one would think is woe sufficient,' observed the rector, with a glance of indignation at his other visitor.

'No, sir, nothing at the Hall; but I have had a letter this morning, which I should like you to see presently.'

'I am off!' cried Dr Fungus, seizing a large white hat with a blue lining, and clapping it violently on his head.

'There is no hurry, sir,' said the young man earnestly; 'my business, although private, is not pressing. Pray, do not let me disturb you.'

'You don't disturb me, sir; you delight me,' was the doctor's reply; 'for you give me an excuse to get away.—Good-morning, Mr Mellish.'

'Good-morning, Dr Fungus, and I hope you will reconsider that matter.'

'The more I think about it, sir, the more am I determined to do as I have stated.'

'Then don't think about it: act mechanically,' returned the parson drily.—'Good-morning, sir.'

'I don't leave this house without my umbrella, Mr Rector—a large blue umbrella, with a metal handle.'

'Oh, there's no mistaking it, sir. It's in the kitchen drying.' And the rector left the room to call down the back-stairs, at the top of a very unconciliatory voice, for the article in question.

'Did you hear what he muttered—that reverend gentleman?' observed the doctor, grinning maliciously. 'He muttered: "Damn your umbrella." I heard him. He wanted to keep it for tithe, I'll warrant.'

'Here is your valuable property,' said the rector reappearing.

'It has been scorched by your fire, Mr Mellish,' replied the other, examining it attentively. 'And it won't go up, sir.—Yes, it will.'

And it went up with a dreadful sound. Large as the national standard, even when furled, the blue umbrella when put up was something enormous; it resembled the enchanted helmet in the Castle of Otranto, and occupied half the space in the little room. The doctor seemed encamped under it, rather than in a place of temporary shelter.

'Your infernal cook has injured it, sir—it will not come down,' exclaimed that gentleman, irritated by several unsuccessful attempts to furl it.

'My infernal cook! I will not endure such language in my house, Dr Fungus.'

'Language! Well, that's very fine, when I just now heard you muttering: "Damn your umbrella!"'

'You'll hear me say it out loud,' retorted the rector angrily, 'if you don't take yourself off.'

Imagine the rector, with his face purple with indignation, holding the door wide open for his guest's egress, while the little doctor strained at the slide of that gigantic umbrella, which would no more come down than a balloon whose valve is fast.

The involuntary witness of this admirable scene, threw himself on the sofa, and fairly roared with laughter; nor was his merriment decreased, when suddenly, with a convulsive click, the umbrella collapsed, and, blinded in its folds, its proprietor rushed headlong into the lobby like a steam-ram. It was not till some time after the front-door had slammed, and the cottage ceased vibrating with the concussion thereof, that the young fellow could articulate a few words of apology.

'I am glad you were amused,' said the rector savagely, cutting him short. 'Did you ever see such a pig-headed— But there; I forget; you know nothing about it, else you would see it was no laughing matter!'

'O sir, but his umbrella!' pleaded the young man, once more relapsing into extravagant mirth.

'Damn his umbrella,' exclaimed the rector fervently: 'it's as obstinate—yes, and as difficult to shut up—as himself—I hope I didn't lose my temper, Mr Steen—did I, added he in more subdued tones, 'or seem to forget that I was his host in any way? But I confess I was put out. However, I need not trouble you with that matter. —Now, what about this letter? It's from Mr Frederick, I suppose? Just so.' And he read it. 'Well, where's the other letter?'

'The other letter?'

'Of course. This is No. 2, although he has not marked it so. "Too hasty," means he replied to your letter at once, without reflection, and dropped it in the post. A thing you should never do, my young friend, till nearly post-time. *Littera scripta manet*. You can't get it out again. He must have got your letter, or how could he have known about the inquest?'

'Just so, sir. I see. But what can possibly have become of the first letter?'

'Possibly become? My good sir, it is almost certain we shall find it at the post-office. If you get one out of two letters in Allgrove at the proper time, that is an excellent average. You may have observed that our walking postman here is lame; well, that is not the worst of him: he is not good at deciphering manuscript—in fact, I don't believe he can read. But the dear squire would appoint him, and I am sure no one will have the heart to remove him now—at least, no one hereabouts.' And the rector regarded the new lord of Allgrove's missive with a little sigh.

'But the other letter, sir? I must get it!'

'True; we must look after No. 1, Mr Steen; though that was a gospel poor Frank Blisssett would never listen to. We shall have it all right. Whenever there is a letter over, which our Mercury can make nothing of, he brings it here. I am his Layard—his decipherer of hieroglyphics—and see, here he comes, limping up the road. It is only right that a postman should be always halting.' Mr Mellish threw up the window.—'Well, George, hast any letter for me?'

'Yes, sir; leastways, if it aint for you, I don't know what body it be for.'

'All right, George; it is for this house.—See, Mr Steen, I think our royal mail may stand excused before such a scrawl as this.'

And indeed the superscription of Mr Frederick's letter was very difficult to make out, and evidently dashed off at speed, if not in passion.

The young man broke the seal, and read as follows: 'The news you send me, Mr Steen, is unaccountable, incomprehensible! An inquest to be held on my poor brother! Surely you must have been misinformed. Such disrespect can surely never be paid to our family as such a course would imply. I put myself out of the question (although even I have some right to complain), but imagine the distress of the widow! Is there no possible means of putting a stop to it? There is nothing I detest so much as a morbid publicity; and as the head of the family, I wish that expression of opinion to be conveyed at once to the proper authorities.—Yours, in haste, FRED BLISSETT.'

'Having shewn you the conclusion of the story, Mr Mellish, there can be no harm in letting you see the beginning,' remarked Charles, handing the note to the rector. 'I suppose it is too late to avoid the inquest now?'

Mr Mellish's face was troubled as he replied: 'Yes, indeed; even if it were possible at any time.'

'But then,' added Steen interrogatively, 'the proceedings will be only a matter of form?'

'Well, I am afraid not altogether that,' said the rector frankly: 'the fact is, it was about this very matter that Fungus and I fell out this morning, and this letter of Mr Frederick's makes the matter ten times worse. The inquest was absolutely necessary—it is the law of the land; but then, as is here hinted, the verdict might be reasonably anticipated, namely, that of accidental death. And so it will be—as it ought to be—unless that little Fungus, who has certainly a maggot in his brain, should make himself obnoxious, which it unhappily lies in his power to do. He is one of the principal witnesses—the second man that saw the poor squire after his accident, and he has taken it into his head that there may have been foul play. Nothing can be more preposterous and out of the question—but perhaps the notion recommends itself to him on that very account.'

'There was nothing valuable missing from poor Mr Blisssett, I understand?' observed Charles. 'His watch and money were all safe?'

'Of course they were. And I will answer for it the squire had not an enemy in the world; nay, not a person to whom his death—if it were felt at all—would not be felt as a loss. I hope and believe that Mr Frederick will turn out far better than is expected of him; but still his brother might have made the same remark to him that Charles II. made to the Duke of York, when requested to take more care of his sacred person: "Oddsfish, man, my life is safe enough, for nobody would put an end to it to put you in my place." No, no. Jack Frost is alone to blame for that sad business. The squire pitched on his head on the hard ground, and so we all lost a friend.'

'Mr Blisssett will take it very ill, I fear,' mused Charles, 'if any other conclusion is come to than that which he mentions here.'

'Of course he will, and naturally enough; and what is of much more consequence, the poor widow will be sure to take it to heart. Mr Lane, my fellow-traveller in the railway carriage the other day, who will be the third material witness this morning, is as anxious as myself that all should go smoothly. He is very indignant with the doctor,

and so will be all the county. Fungus will be put in Coventry, as sure as he lives, if he proves obstinate; he'll be left alone with his blue umbrella, sir.—It's eleven o'clock, and the inquiry has already commenced: we shall know all about it in a few hours. They wanted to summon me—as the last person who saw him alive in Allgrove; he waved his hand to me, and smiled and nodded in his old genial fashion, as I was shaving that morning. But fortunately (for it would have been very sad work) there was another man who saw him later, so I was held excused.—There, that's the fellow just coming out of the inn-door—Jem Templar, who lives up at the Druid Ring, which I shall hope to take you to see some day. He was first called, no doubt, and has given his evidence already.—Hollo! there's Ricketts too—our doctor; perhaps he knows how matters are going.' Once more Mr Mellish threw up the window, or rather threw it back, for it was an old-fashioned latticed frame, which opened door-wise, and was almost as much the channel of communication between the rector and his parishioners as the door itself. In summer weather, he often sat at it, exchanging remarks with the passers-by of all sorts, notwithstanding that its opposite casement opened on the garden, and had a much pleasanter look-out; the good parson was very human in his sympathies, and perhaps also he did not very much care for

The river's wooded reach,

or the beauties of nature generally.

'Hi! Mr Ricketts!' cried he, beckoning with head and hand; 'one word with you, if you please.'

Mr Ricketts came: a young man, not very scientific-looking as yet, but with a praiseworthy intention of becoming so. He practised pursing the lips and shaking the head, and identified himself with his patients as much as possible by speaking of them in the first person plural. 'We feel better this morning, do we not? Yes, our physic has done us good,' and so on.

'Well, sir, what are they doing up there? It is a very straightforward case, I suppose—the poor squire's?'

'In my opinion, quite straightforward, sir. The cause of death, as I have just been testifying, was from the injury to the brain; the blow—that is the fall—on the occiput was so violent as to shatter the parietal bones—so-called, Mr Mellish, as your classical knowledge will suggest'—

'Yes, yes—a wall, a wall!' exclaimed the rector impatiently. 'I don't care about all that. Is there any difference of opinion about the matter—that's what I wish to know?'

Mr Ricketts gave a professional shrug, calculated to produce every confidence in a beholder, had not youth and vigour given so much rapidity to the movement as to assimilate it to an acrobatic display.

'Dr Fungus holds, it seems, another view, Mr Mellish; and being a learned physician, and I only a poor general practitioner, I daresay it will have more weight with the jury.'

'You don't mean to tell me,' cried the rector excitedly, 'that that old fool is going to persuade them to return a verdict of Wilful Murder?'

'Well, no, sir—certainly not that. But I should not be surprised if they gave an open verdict—I should not indeed, sir.'

'Umph!' said the rector discontentedly. Then,

as though wishing to dismiss from his mind a disagreeable subject, he introduced the two young men. 'Mr Ricketts, our doctor; Mr Charles Steen, friend of Mr Frederick Blissett's.'

'Indeed, sir. Most proud,' said the surgeon. 'Mr Blissett is well, I hope?—Not at all well? Dear me.' His hands beginning to revolve slowly as the prospect of an extension of practice dawned upon him. 'He has long lived a town-life, I understand. When he comes down here, Allgrove air will set him up, I trust.'

'Our last squire did not patronise the doctor much,' observed the rector. 'I suppose that this dreadful *post-mortem* business is the only one wherein— Ah, to be sure, though, he had gout; but for many years past, he used to prescribe for himself for that.'

'Ah, a great mistake that, sir—a sad mistake indeed;' and Mr Ricketts for the first time evinced a genuine melancholy, and evidently meant what he said. He was proceeding to shew that as every man who is his own lawyer has a fool for his client, so every one who doctors himself, or even keeps a medicine-chest, in place of being supplied by the general practitioner in the usual way, does both a foolish and a dangerous thing, when suddenly, from the door of the *Rising Sun*, there streamed forth some half-a-dozen gentlemen, and 'Look, look! the inquest is over,' cried the rector, and hastily leaving the room, he snatched up his hat, and hurried into the street. As he did so, Charles noticed the knot of persons in front of the door cease their animated talk, and draw back to left and right, while some individual emerged from it. He wore a broad-brimmed white hat, and carried an enormous umbrella, under which, like one in a religious procession, he slowly moved away amid a profound silence.

'There goes old Fungus,' was Mr Ricketts' irreverent remark; 'and you may take my word for it, Mr Steen, that he has put their backs up.'

#### HOW WE CURE OUR BACON.

IN some regions of the United States, pig-philosophy is more sedulously studied than in any part of Europe. Cincinnati has become so famous in this matter as to have acquired the name of *Porcopolis*—an Anglo-Greek compound which we may accept or not as we please. Enormous establishments are maintained, in which piggy is put out of the world 'with neatness and dispatch,' and converted into pork, saveloys, sausages, lard, and bristles in a wonderfully short space of time. Slaughtering is reduced to scientific principles, and economy in all its details is carried to a length never before reached in matters of this kind.

As regards our own country, we are not, in general, scientific pig-killers. Pat nearly always sells his pig to a dealer; and the Irish pig-killers and pork-curers are not remarkable for the cleanliness of their establishments or the completeness of their processes. Nor are matters much better in England, where the barrelling of salt pork is not so large a branch of trade as in Ireland, and where piggy is more frequently converted into roast than boiled. There is, however, one establishment in England of a really complete and efficient kind—a real bacon-factory on a large scale.

This place, then, where we not only 'save our bacon' but cure it also, is situated in

Gloucestershire, within convenient distance from the railway station at Stonehouse. The year is not so very far back when a certain farmer killed his first pig and smoked his first side of bacon at that spot; his place grew, and his operations grew, until at length its extent warranted the formation of a 'Limited' Company, which started with a capital of fifty thousand pounds. The Company do not rear or fatten their own pigs; the Cincinnati people are hog-breeders as well as pork-packers; but here the operations do not commence until the animals have been purchased at any markets that may be most advantageous. Practically, they adopt two plans: they purchase all around from neighbouring farmers, who send their pigs on foot by road; and they purchase at Bristol market, whence the animals are sent by rail to Stonehouse, and thence to the establishment in very large four-horse wagons constructed for the purpose. In these two ways, something like five hundred pigs per week are conveyed to the place—there to bear their hapless fate as best they may.

Arrived at their bourn, the pigs are placed in pens liberally strewn with dry sawdust. When the hour of execution arrives, they are driven, a penfull at a time, through a door into an enclosure. This enclosure is at the end of a long narrow room, the floor of which slopes downward from the walls to the centre, to facilitate drainage. There is an iron bar overhead running the whole length of the room—a cunning bit of philosophy; for, being well greased, it allows of the slaughtered animals being slipped along from one operator and operation to another with wonderful ease. A pig—no matter what pig, whether from Farmer Hodge or from a cottager—is seized upon; he is brought underneath the bar; he is hoisted up by a windlass, and slung upon the bar, with his head looking downward to that earth which he is destined to tread no more; he is hitched by one hind-leg, which causes him to dangle in a position equally undignified and uncomfortable; and then— But no; we will not describe in any detail the manner in which a sharp knife puts an end to poor piggy's existence; we will, as novelists sometimes do, 'draw a veil' over the scene. Suffice it to say that death ensues with (so far as is known) a minimum of suffering.

The iron bar runs continuously through the killing-room, the cooling-room, the weighing-room, and the cutting-room, in such fashion that the pig may be slipped along with as little handling as possible. A burner, scorcher, or singer attacks the carcass with an iron implement shaped something like a saddle, fixed to two flexible pipes supplied respectively with gas and air; the interior of the saddle is dotted all over with small pipes. The gas and air being mingled and ignited, numberless little jets blaze out. The scorcher holds the saddle by two handles, and passes it all over the body of the dead pig, singeing off every hair or bristle. The flame is of a kind which singes rather than scorches, and does not injure that which is to become either rind or 'crackling' by and by. Air, to aid the combustion, is forced into the saddle by means of a small steam blowing-machine—an apparatus which of course could not be afforded unless many of piggy's brothers and sisters are dealt with about the same time. The carcass is then slipped along the bar to the cooling-room, which affords space for two hundred at once; one short bar acts as a feeder to several long

parallel bars, which can be easily filled one after another—like the bars or rails over which hides and skins are hung in a tannery, or herrings in a Yarmouth drying-house, or linen in a laundress's yard. Here, when cool, each pig is cut open, and those portions of the interior removed which, though neither pork nor bacon, have still a value. When thoroughly cleaned, these portions are laid aside in separate groups; some to be converted into sausages, some into chitterlings, and some into other mysterious forms. The chitterlings are at once cooked, and sold to the owners of a humble class of cooks' shops; while the elements for sausages are passed on to the curing-room, there to await a further ordeal. The rest of the carcass, after hanging twelve or fifteen hours to cool, is slipped on to the weighing-room, where a scale-beam forms part of the greased bar. The weight is taken, and is recorded on piggy's back as well as on a board; on the board, the exact weight is mentioned; but the carcasses themselves are marked only as being 'large' or 'small,' to facilitate after-operations. The neighbouring farmers sell at so much per stone for the meat only, after the inside has been removed; and this determines the stage at which the weighing takes place.

Next ensues the cutting up. We hardly know how many carcasses one man can cut up in a given space of time; but the strength of the establishment is equal to the cooling and cutting up of a hundred in an hour. Thus dismembered, the sides of piggy are sent to the curing-room; the bladebones, from the centre of the shoulder, have the meat scraped off, and are sold at about a penny apiece; the backbones, shorn in a similar way of meat, find a market at a little higher price; the scraps from the bladebones and backbones go to augment the store of sausage material; the feet are immersed in large stone cisterns filled with pickle or brine; the chaps, to produce the Bath chaps so much in favour among many families, are salted in large boxes, then dried, and smoked to a rich brown; the tongues are pickled in a separate cistern; so is the face—that is, a fair half of the head, nose, and cheek; and so are the eyes, which comprise what remains after the fat chaps have been cut away.

The curing-room is an immense place some two or three hundred feet long, with a floor too moist with brine, and an atmosphere too damp and chilly, to be altogether attractive. Receptacles are at hand for eight hundred tons of ice, a store necessary to keep the place cool throughout one summer. The mode of salting is more scientific, more expeditious, and more economical than that which used to be adopted. Under the old plan, the sides of bacon (or rather, of pig) were cut open in various places, and salt, being crammed in by hand, was left to penetrate everywhere as best it might. Under the new plan, there is an apparatus by which a kind of hollow needle makes numerous perforations, and becomes a channel through which brine is driven into the meat, through the aid of a forcing-pump and a flexible tube. It is done quickly and done well, the meat being speedily saturated with liquid brine instead of salt. A number of sides, treated in this way, are piled up against a wall, with flat pieces of wood intervening; and here they remain about ten days, until the brine and the meat become intimately acquainted with each other. A kind of hoar-frost of salt, collected on the surface, is swept off; and then we have what



is virtually salt-pork, though not such as English housewives are in the habit of recognising by that name. Among the many advantages attending the carrying on of these operations on a large scale is, that nothing is wasted; the pigs' blood is sold to cloth-scurers (of whom there are many in the Gloucestershire woollen districts), while the brushed-off and refuse salt is useful as manure.

We follow the pig-sides from the curing-room to the smoking-room. This consists practically of two rooms, one over the other, with a lattice-work floor between. The sides of pork-bacon or bacon-pork are hung nearly close together in the upper room; while in the lower, a fire of oak billets and sawdust is kindled. Here the sides smoke away for three or four days, until they acquire that special change of qualities that distinguishes bacon from pork. It requires care and tact in this process to give to the surface that peculiar bloom that belongs to good bacon.

The other kinds of cured pig-meat pass through processes differing more or less from the curing of sides in some of the details. The hocks, backs, and bits are similarly cured and smoked, but perhaps with less necessity for great care. The chaps are cured in a separate room, hooked to each other like links in a chain. The hams are mostly cured in winter, and sugar is employed in the process. All this goodly salted and smoked meat is finally weighed, wrapped up, and packed for sending whither bacon-eaters most do congregate, and where rasher and gammon are held in proper esteem.

It is an endless source of fun to wags and punsters to discourse about the surreptitious and mysterious compounds sold under the familiar name of sausages. We are told that sausages may be very good 'if we know the lady that made them'; and we hear cruel hints about puppies and kittens (certainly against their own will and consent) being concerned in the matter. But *our* sausages are genuine, and we will stand no nonsense about them. The men and women engaged in this work at the Gloucestershire establishment are required to be scrupulously clean in person and garments, and everything employed is examined to see that it is *bonâ fide* and wholesome. The scraps of pig-meat, already mentioned, descend through a shoot into the sausage-making room. Loaves of bread are baked; the crust is cut off; and the crumb, being thrown into a chopping-machine, is there mixed with the meat and a certain quantity of pepper and other spice. A steam-chopper, a peaceful sort of guillotine, is then set to work, chopping up about eighty pounds of ingredients in one-tenth as many minutes. The stuffing of the sausage-skins with this compound is a curious process. The skin is drawn over the lower end of a pipe, the upper end of which forms a kind of funnel or receptacle. A woman, with scrupulously clean hands, takes up the impalpable mixture (which has been scraped out of the chopping-machine with a spatula), makes it into a ball, and dashes it down into the funnel until twenty or twenty-five pounds have been thus collected. The funnel or muzzle is closed, and then steam-power is employed to force the mixture down into the skin. And thus there grows a sausage several feet (perhaps yards) in length. It is removed, weighed, and cut into lengths; and by a few dexterous twists, these lengths are converted into an equal number of pounds of pork-sausages,

'warranted to be,' &c. When all are ready, they are packed in hampers of twenty pounds each; and there are all the appliances for filling several hundreds of such hampers weekly. Our three-halfpenny friends, the saveloys, are treated somewhat differently; they contain the crust of the loaves instead of the crumb, and are cooked and smoked ready for eating before being sent from the establishment.

Then there is a lard-factory, with boilers, cooling-pans, and all the odds and ends necessary for preparing that pure and white substance lard from surplus pork fat and suet. Here, too, are made those porky cakes called *greaves*, a kind of sediment from the lard or suet, more appreciated by four-footed animals than by bipeds. And here also are prepared the skins for the sausages and the bladders for the lard.

Let no one therefore suppose that the curing of our bacon is a trifling affair. The managers of this establishment tell of twenty thousand pigs being cut up and cured in a year into forty thousand sides of bacon; of two hundred thousand pounds of sausages being made in the same time, with a proportionate quantity of saveloys and lard, and of eight hundred thousand pounds of salt used annually in the process.

## THE PRETTY BUTCHERESS.

IN EIGHT CHAPTERS.—CHAP. VI.

THE next evening, Fantom called on Renshaw, and found him at home.

Renshaw was a curate, but a curate of a peculiar kind; a curate whose rector would have been afraid of him if he hadn't been on excellent terms with him. Curates are generally men who have not taken very good degrees at the university, and who have little or no money beyond their stipends; they do not, therefore, very often inspire their rectors with awe. But Renshaw was a man who had taken an excellent degree, who was fellow of his college, and had therefore some three hundred a year besides his stipend, and who had taken a curacy in a populous and not very reputable parish, that he might have some hard work to do, and some definite object to achieve. At college, he had been not only a great scholar, but also a great athlete; and so he brought to his clerical labours not only his natural mental abilities, which were great, and his acquired learning, which was ample, but which no one knew better than he how to keep in the background until it was wanted, but also an excellent stock of physical power, that stood him in good stead; for he would join in the athletic sports of his parishioners, and, by his prowess, gained influence of an extraordinary kind. Moreover, he would smoke a pipe with one man, drink a glass of beer with another, take a cup of tea with another, and talk with all about their pursuits and difficulties; never talking mere cant, but never omitting an opportunity of giving sound advice, and pointing out plainly that to be careless of another world because this world goes ill with you is mere petulance, and as foolish as to cut your ship adrift from its last holding-anchor because all your other anchors have given way. His rector, who was a gentleman and nothing more, having no pretensions to scholarship, intellectual

power, zeal, or fervent piety, did not understand him, but admired and liked him, and would as soon have thought of criticising his sermons as of interfering with his way of doing his parochial work. The rector, in fact, admitted in his own heart Renshaw's great superiority in everything except age, and regarded him as already a bishop in everything but the name, costume, palace, and revenues, which were sure to come in time.

Fantom and Renshaw had rowed in the same boat at the university, and had formed that close intimacy which often exists between men who have one vein as it were in common, and in other respects are as different as Jacob from Esau. Fantom, though he had not been a reading man, had often displayed a quickness of apprehension and an elegance of taste which had commanded Renshaw's admiration; and he had a general dash and brilliancy in person, manner, and conversation which exercised almost a fascination over the plainer but more profound and erudite scholar. The two men now sat, each in an arm-chair, on either side of a bright fire (for it was autumn and chilly), and smoked each a long clay pipe in silence.

At length Renshaw said: 'Part of your explanation I had last night from Miss Brentwood; the other part shews that you are as impulsive and rash as ever. Impulse is a ticklish thing: when it led you to send your fist, without explanation, into the ruffian's face, you did well to yield; when it urged you into a butcher's shop to buy a chop of a pretty girl, you were rash to obey.'

'A thundering fool,' assented Fantom cheerfully.

'I know what's right, but only so;  
I never practise what I know.'

Isn't there something like that in the Psalms?

'You know perfectly well what the lines are,' said Renshaw drily.

'By the way,' continued Fantom, 'Miss Dixon asked me the other day what a drysalter was; and I said the Psalms of David by Tate and Brady were the only dry-Psalter I knew anything about; and she didn't take me at all, but said quite simply it couldn't be *that*, as she knew it was some sort of tradesman.'

'I wish you'd talk seriously,' said Renshaw.

'Very well,' assented Fantom humbly.

'Touching your acquaintance with Miss Brentwood,' said Renshaw severely, 'I wish from my heart you had never made it.'

'I am almost inclined to wish so too; but then, you know, it is too late to wish *that*. All I want now is to have your advice.'

Renshaw reflected for a few moments, and then said bluntly: 'You can't marry her, Fantom.'

'I don't know about that. I'—

'Nonsense. You are very likely to come into your uncle's baronetcy and estates, and you would raise in—if not her and yourself—at anyrate her friends and your friends, and I don't know how many people, all kinds of ill feelings, such as envy, hatred, and malice. You should recollect that "property has its duties as well as its rights," and so has station. If you had already won her affections, I might speak differently; but as you are only on the point of trying to win them, I warn you, by the probability of future misery to you and yours, to her and hers, and of innumerable troubles, dimly foreseen, to make a great effort, and forbear. If it were I, now'—

'You! Why, you're a much greater man than I shall ever be.'

'Stuff! I am self-made, and a parson. Parsons and their wives have, or should have, duties different from those of lay baronets and their wives; and the very woman who, as a parson's wife, would be most welcome everywhere, from grandee to peasant, and would do most good, would, as a landed baronet's wife, run a risk of being unwelcome everywhere, and doing a great deal of harm. Besides, I am alone; I have neither father nor mother, kith nor kin, ancestor nor inheritance; if I marry, I simply give up my fellowship for a college living, where my wife and I would find enough to do, and sufficient society, though the high and mighty of the village (for I should wait for a rural vicarage) should despise us. But my opinion is, that a parson's wife is liked all the better, and can make her way better, if she be sufficiently well educated and lady-like, without being accomplished, high-born, and superfine.'

'And has Miss Brentwood the qualifications you speak of?' asked Fantom in a peculiar voice.

'I have known her,' replied Renshaw frankly, 'for two years; I have had good opportunities of observing her both at the Sunday-school and at home; and I have no hesitation whatever in saying that she has.'

'But you don't think she is good enough for me?' asked Fantom ironically.

'Good enough, certainly; fitted, no.'

'What the devil is to be done, then? That affair last night, the little walk with her, and her sorrow, have made such an impression upon me that I can't get her out of my mind.'

'The devil,' said Renshaw quietly, 'is just what you have to keep out of the business! I know you are not a heartless blackguard'—

'Thank you,' interrupted Fantom emphatically.

'As you proved,' Renshaw went on calmly, 'in the case of what you called the black-eyed bakeress, who was a vain little fool, and would have gone on to destruction, if you hadn't listened to your own good heart—and to me.'

'To you, I fear, chiefly, old fellow,' said Fantom; 'I have no great dependence on my good heart. But what do you advise?'

'Look here,' said Renshaw. 'My rector, old Dr Dixon, whom you know very well, is going to spend a year abroad: he starts next week; go with him and his family: I'm sure they will be delighted to have you; and if you haven't changed your mind when you come back, we can talk over the matter again.'

'And Miss Brentwood may by that time have married a journeyman butcher—or a parson,' said Fantom discontentedly.

'I think not,' observed Renshaw coolly: 'she will be too much afflicted by her little brother's death to dream of such a thing for some time to come; and even if she have, you will have been relieved from all further trouble.'

'That's a cold-blooded way of putting it,' said Fantom. 'But I must be going now. Good-night, old fellow; I'll think over what you have said.'

In the end, it was arranged that Fantom should go abroad with the Dixons. He was, however, first of all taken by Renshaw to the butcher's, where he received the thanks of Mr and Mrs Brentwood for his protection of their daughter; and where Nelly bade him good-bye, and thanked him with such pretty ladylike warmth and modesty that he went

away very disconsolate indeed. He did not fail, however, to arrange with Renshaw that Mrs Straddle should receive her weekly payments, notwithstanding the absence of her employer; 'for you know, Mrs Straddle,' Fantom tried to say severely, 'I shall expect you to keep my things in first-rate order, and to send me my letters (Mr Renshaw will help you) to the different post-offices, which I shall give you due notice of from time to time.'

CHAPTER VII.

It was the end of November, but the weather in Italy was lovelier than September yields to the 'remote Britons.' Dr Dixon had gone out for a stroll; and Fantom sat with Miss Dixon and her sister Caroline at an open window, enjoying the balmy air, and watching the dances of the deep-blue waves, rosy tinted by the setting sun.

'Caroline,' said Miss Dixon suddenly, 'do you see that girl with the pitcher?'

'Yes. Rather an unusual kind of beauty for this climate.'

'Does she remind you of anybody?'

'N-n-no; not that I can remember.'

'Not of the "fair gospeller"?''

'What! Ellen Brentwood, the Sunday-school teacher?—Well, there is certainly some likeness.'

'She is not so beautiful as Ellen Brentwood,' said Fantom decisively.

'Oh!' exclaimed Miss Dixon with an intonation of surprise, 'do you know the "fair gospeller," Mr Fantom?'

'Slightly,' answered Fantom briefly; and Caroline Dixon observed him attentively as he tried to look absorbed in the view from the window.

'Through Mr Renshaw, I suppose?' continued Miss Dixon inquisitively.

'Partly,' replied Fantom curtly.

Hereupon, Miss Dixon, giving him one searching look, which he did not appear to notice, left the room upon household affairs; and Fantom and Caroline were alone.

Caroline was a girl of two-and-twenty, upon whom the painters who were studying in the favourite abode of Pictura cast longing eyes, so excellent a model would she have made for him who wished to paint a Modesty—not a Bashfulness, for that is a very different thing. She was far from bashful, as her steady gaze and open expression shewed; but her whole bearing, her unpretending but elegant dress, her ready but placid smile, her easy but measured motions, her natural and graceful attitudes, her air of tranquil confidence, spoke of the modest spirit within her. If there be an impalpable majesty which 'doth hedge a king,' there is an impalpable power which doth hedge a pure good woman; and that is the soul-born modesty which exhales from and envelops her as with a protective mist. Caroline was not beautiful, but attractive; refinement was written upon every lineament of her face; and her delicacy, grace, and accomplishments would have done honour to a princess. All this, for the first time, now struck Fantom as he turned to her and asked abruptly: 'What do you think of Ellen Brentwood?'

'Do you wish me to describe her anatomically, as they do a gorilla?' said Caroline, laughing and slightly blushing.

'No. Do you think her pretty?'

'More than that—beautiful,' answered Caroline candidly.

'Do you know anything about her education? I have seldom spoken to her, and then for a very short time; but she struck me as being better educated and more ladylike than you would have expected a girl of her class to be.'

'I have seen a great deal of her at the Sunday-school and at her own house, for I used to go occasionally to see her poor little brother. But, as papa says, we cannot very well mix on equal terms with persons in the Brentwoods' position; for you see we could not pick and choose without causing jealousy and enmity; otherwise, I should desire no more ladylike an acquaintance than Ellen Brentwood. She is not accomplished; but so far as a plain English education goes, I believe her to be superior to nine ladies out of ten: she plays prettily, and sings simple things very sweetly; she is sincerely religious; and she is a charming, grateful, affectionate, warm-hearted little soul.'

'She would make a good parson's wife, I should think,' said Fantom half inquiringly.

'Excellent,' answered Caroline warily, 'if he did not affect—or, to speak more like a clergyman's daughter, if his duties did not throw him into—society where prejudice against his wife's parentage and connections might damage his influence and her happiness.'

'You do not think she could get on in society?'

'I think she *could*; but society would not allow it. Society would put obstacles in her way, which she, not having been born with the best means of overcoming them, could only destroy by a method which so gentle and simple a creature would not and could not employ.—But, pray, have you any particular parson in your eye?' she added smiling.

'I have in both my eyes at present,' answered Fantom, looking at her meaningly, 'something far more attractive than any parson. It is delightful to know, what I never could have believed on hearsay, that it is possible for a beautiful girl to have full justice done her by one of her own sex.'

'Really, you seem to have a very favourable opinion of our sex,' said Caroline with a smile.

'I have now,' replied Fantom emphatically; and at that moment Dr Dixon entered, the *tit-a-tit* was ended, and the conversation was changed.

That night, before he slept, Fantom thought a great deal about Caroline; and weighed her in the balances, and found her wanting very little of the proper weight.

At the same time Nelly's image became slightly obscured.

Every day, Fantom discovered some new point of excellence in Caroline; every night he weighed her in the balances, and found her nearer and nearer to the proper weight.

And every night Nelly's image waxed fainter and fainter.

At last, when the travelling-party was on the point of returning home, for the year had all but expired, it was evident that Caroline had been weighed in the balances and found more than equal to her weight in gold and other precious things, for the image of sweet Nelly was quite concealed by the interposition of a figure 'clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,' and wearing a wreath of orange-blossoms.

Poor Mrs Straddle's engagement might be considered to be over.

## CHAPTER VIII.

It was with unalloyed pleasure that Renshaw read in the paper the announcement of Fantom's marriage: 'At the British Embassy, . . .'

'The Dixons are as good a family as the Fantoms,' he said to himself, 'and Caroline Dixon is a wife for a prince.'

Renshaw had not forgotten his promise to the dying child: what kindness he could shew to Mr and Mrs Brentwood he had shewn, and he had loved Nelly as much as he could—and that was a great deal.

When, therefore, Fantom and the Dixons returned from abroad, and Renshaw paid his first visit to his rector, with whom Mr and Mrs Fantom were staying, he could give favourable accounts of many of the parishioners, and especially of the Brentwoods.

'I wish that nice girl, Ellen Brentwood, were well married,' said the old rector.

'And so do I,' chimed in both Mrs and Mr Fantom; but Miss Dixon merely tossed her head.

'I daresay she will be married soon enough, or it will not be for want of asking,' remarked Renshaw quietly. 'But, by the way,' he added, 'I've something to say about the Straddles, which Fantom will be glad to hear.'

'Out with it!' said Fantom joyously. 'My honeymoon has been embittered with thinking of what will become of poor Mrs Straddle,' for which observation he received a pinch and its antidote from the late Caroline Dixon.

'Well,' said Renshaw, 'you know that a great deal may happen in a year; but you would hardly have believed that so much good could happen to Straddle in a year. The eccentric old woman, named Straddle, who owned those broken-windowed, ghostly-looking houses in Warrington Street, and wouldn't have them repaired for fear of losing money, and who lived in a back-kitchen of one of them, has died without leaving a will, and Straddle the cab-driver turns out to be her heir-at-law.'

'Hurrah!' cried Fantom; and there was general applause.

'So Mrs Straddle will be able to do without your honour's bounty,' said Renshaw, 'for Straddle is in work again, and will find no difficulty in getting advanced to him what money he wants to get his property in order.'

'He will be assisted by a usurer of the name of Renshaw, I suppose,' cried Fantom, looking kindly at his old friend; 'I'm sure Caroline and I would not mind doing a little usury in such company.'

'Never mind how it is to be managed,' said Renshaw; 'but I shall call on you if necessary.'

The rest of the evening was spent in such pleasant discourse as only they can appreciate who have parted from and met again old and valued friends.

Not long after the return of the wanderers, Renshaw took an opportunity of saying to Nelly: 'I would not for the world remind you unnecessarily of a painful, and yet not painful scene, but do you recollect what your little brother said as he lay—'

'Oh! so well,' interrupted Nelly; 'every word and every line.'

'He asked me to love you as well as I could,' said Renshaw tremulously.

Nelly made a motion of assent, but spoke no word.

'I couldn't love you more than I do,' continued Renshaw, going close to her.

Nelly looked on the ground, and two tears rolled down her cheeks.

'I couldn't love anybody more than I love you,' Renshaw said passionately, putting one arm round her waist. 'O Ellen, will you not speak? Will you be my wife?'

Nelly flung herself upon his breast, and sobbed: 'If you will have my poor love, God knows you have had it long.'

And so Renshaw *did* put the ring on Nelly's finger after all; and Straddle, having set up as a cab-master and fly-master, drove the bride to church; and Jimmy drove the carriage containing Sir George and Lady Fantom, for Jimmy had left boot-cleaning, and took to his father's business; whereas Billy went into the indoors 'newspaperin'. For Renshaw and Nelly were not married at once, but waited until Renshaw obtained a small college living in the country; and by that time George Fantom had succeeded his uncle in the baronetcy and estates.

Mrs Renshaw made a capital parson's wife; and her father would fain have supplied the parsonage with butcher-meat gratis; but Renshaw, with his usual sense of justice, suggested to his father-in-law, who fully admitted his reasoning, that the parson of a parish ought to support the tradesmen of the parish. Howbeit, at certain seasons, old Brentwood sent such prime joints to the parsonage, that the archdeacon and other great persons who dined there at such seasons declared that no lord in the kingdom had such excellent meat as Renshaw had. Occasionally, Mr and Mrs Brentwood went down to stay at the parsonage from Saturday until Monday, and enjoyed themselves very much, meeting no 'society,' and finding great favour with the farmers and humbler villagers, who increased rather than diminished in respect when they knew what Mr Brentwood's occupation was, and saw the sort of beef and mutton he was in the habit of supplying.

As for the 'pretty butcheress,' she was highly regarded by both great and small, and was especially cultivated by her neighbours, Sir George and Lady Fantom. And Renshaw begat sons and daughters, the former of whom, oddly enough, resembled the 'pretty butcheress,' and the latter the black-haired parson.

## MY BOY.

- A lock of golden hair,  
Tied with a silken thread;
- A tiny shoelet lying there;  
A snow-white curtained bed;
- A little broken toy;  
A book all soiled and torn;
- A jaunty velvet cap my boy  
Has often, often worn—
- Alas, is all that's left!
- (Such is the Father's will.)
- His joyous laughter sounds no more;  
His little heart is still.